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REAGAN CONFIRMS IRAN GOT ARMS AID; CALLS DEALS VITAL

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 12 — In a meeting with Congressional leaders today, President Reagan for the first time personally acknowledged sending military supplies to Iran, and he defended his action as necessary for establishing ties to moderate elements there, according to Administration officials.

The officials said the meeting occurred after Mr. Reagan unexpectedly summoned key Congressional leaders to the White House to respond to increasing demands by legislators for an explanation of the Administration's reversal of its policy ruling out any deals for the release of American hostages.

The officials said Mr. Reagan told the group of four senators and House members that he saw some hope that the current secret negotiations with Iran would lead to the release of two more hostages.

'Interest in U.S. Ties'

In acknowledging the Administration's involvement in supplying arms to Iran, Mr. Reagan argued that the United States had undertaken clandestine contacts with the Teheran Government because some factions in Iran were viewed, in the words of one participant at the meeting as "traditionalists or nonradicals who have a greater interest in U.S. ties."

As Mr. Reagan addressed the legislators, the highest ranking Iranian official in the United States strongly denied that his Government was involved in trading American hostages for military equipment. But the official, Said Rajale-Khorassani, Iran's chief delegate to the United Nations, made it clear that Iran would welcome better relations with the United States.

'We Would Be at Fault'

Under sharp questioning from the legislators about Washington's involvement in arms shipments to Iran, Mr. Reagan said, in essence, that these were necessary to establish closer ties and to improve prospects for the release of some of the American hostages held in Lebanon, an Administration official said.

"We would be at fault if Khomeini died and we had not made any preparations for contacts with a future regime," said one Administration official, paraphrasing what Mr. Reagan said at the meeting. "The arms were necessary for that." He was referring to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the paramount Iranian leader, who is strongly anti-American.

The official added that the arms supplies for Iran did not constitute "ransom" for American hostages held in Lebanon by a pro-Iranian group.

Mr. Reagan, the official said, told the legislators that he was optimistic about the release of two hostages held in Lebanon by a pro-Iranian group. "Our hopes have been up on these hostages for the last 48 hours," the official said.

There are two categories of American hostages in Beirut, according to Administration officials. One includes Thomas M. Sutherland and Terry A. Anderson, who have been detained by the same group that held the three hostages who were released over the last 18 months. The other three Americans, who have been kidnapped in recent months, are believed to be held by different groups.

The Administration has not sought to differentiate in its efforts to free them all, but says that it is more realistic to expect that Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Anderson would be released first, since they are in the group whose freedom has been sought in the contacts with Iran.

Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, declined to give details of the two-hour meeting in the White House Situation Room, which was called in response to a growing Congressional uproar about the Administration's clandestine ties to Iran. There was no prior announcement of the meeting, which was attended by many of the highest-ranking officials of the Reagan Administration.

A brief statement by Mr. Speakes said: "The President met today from 2 P.M. to 4 P.M. with the bipartisan leadership of the House of Representatives and the Senate to brief them on recent developments on U.S.-Iran relations and other matters."

Attending the briefing were Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas, the majority leader, Senator Robert C. Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, the minority leader, Representative Jim Wright, Democrat of Texas, the House majority leader and Representative Dick Cheney, Republican of Wyoming, the assistant minority leader.

Senator Byrd said through a spokesman that the briefing had not altered his criticism of the secret dealings with Iran. "My mind was not changed," he said. "The answers I got did not change my thinking or the impressions I had from what I had seen or read in the media."

Representative Jim Wright of Texas, who is expected to be the Speaker of the House next year, would not comment on details of the briefing.

In a statement, he said, "For approximately two hours we discussed the entire situation involving Iran, the American hostages and the matter of arms shipments. The discussions were frank and candid but at no time vituperative."

"Along with other members of Congress in attendance, I expressed certain convictions regarding the direction of our foreign affairs and how to improve future relations between the executive and legislative branches."

"In pursuit of this goal and because of the confidential nature of some of the material disclosed, I would like to withhold further comment at this time."

Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, was instrumental in setting up today's meeting, overcoming the objections of National Security Council officials, White House aides said. Earlier in the day, Mr. Regan met privately with several White House officials and was told that the Administration faced "a serious perceptual problem" because of revelations about United States dealings with Iran.

"Regan said they were worried about the other hostages — that's why we couldn't say anything. It would en-

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danger their lives," said one White House official. "He was frustrated."

Officials said that the ongoing private contacts between United States and Iranian emissaries, marked a faintly positive sign in the effort by the Administration to gain the release of some of the American hostages held by a group believed to have ties with Iran.

"Let me just leave it we remain hopeful," Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, told reporters this morning. He said that Administration moves to secure the release of the hostages had been "wise and appropriate" as well as legal.

"We're not at liberty to explain some of the actions that we've taken, and until we are, and until all the facts come out, I would caution the press, the Congress and others not to jump to conclusions and not make judgments on the basis of what they may have heard or read," Mr. Speakes said.

Reported in Lebanese Magazine

Following the release in Lebanon on Nov. 2 of David P. Jacobsen, a 55-year-old hospital administrator, after more than 17 months in captivity, White House officials were hopeful that Mr. Anderson and Mr. Sutherland would be released by their captors, believed to be the same pro-Iranian group. The disclosure of the secret United States dealings with Iran, first made in a

Lebanese magazine, seemed, for the moment, to have dashed hopes for their release.

But Mr. Reagan, in his meeting with the legislators today, made it clear that the United States had received indications that there was a possibility that one or two of the hostages would be released soon.

In the meeting with Mr. Reagan were Vice President Bush, Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger, Attorney General Edwin L. Meese 3d, William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, Vice Adm. John M. Poin-dexter, the President's national security adviser, and Mr. Regan.

One official who attended the White House meeting said that Mr. Reagan defended the arms dealings with Iran as necessary in the effort to shape relations with the Teheran Government. An internal struggle is reported to be underway in Iran in anticipation of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. The official conceded that the supply of arms was "intertwined" with the release of the hostages, and that Mr. Reagan expressed "measured optimism" about the possibility that the Americans would be freed.

The White House meeting called today was an apparently an attempt to respond to bipartisan criticism in Congress of the dealings with Iran, which were carried out by the National Security Council.

Move for Confirmation

Senator Patrick J. Leahy, a Vermont Democrat and vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said today that one result of this episode will probably be a move in Congress to require Senate confirmation of the national security adviser.

Mr. Leahy said that he would oppose this, because President should be able to have an adviser of his own choosing. "But with that comes the understanding that the advisor has to act within the constraints of being an adviser, not a mini-C.I.A."

The Senator said Congress has to find out if the mission was assigned to the N.S.C. staff to avoid the Congressional oversight that would have automatically come into play if the State or Defense Departments or the Central Intelligence Agency were involved. "Were State and Defense kept out of the loop, or did they ask quietly to step out of the loop in order to preserve deniability?"

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